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Think and Love

A Happy Marriage in Self-Help Books in the Second Half of the 20. Century

The main subject of the doctoral thesis entitled *Think and Love. A Happy Marriage in Self-Help Books in the Second Half of the 20. Century* is the vision of a successful intimate relationship in the therapeutic narrative in the United States and in Poland in the second half of the 20. century. In four chapters four phenomena are described that create and influence this narrative.

In the first chapter couple therapy is described: a therapeutic practice which focuses not on the inner psychological reality but on the relationship between two people which is given its own ontological identity. The beginnings of couple therapy as well as its main theoreticians from the 1960s and 70s are mentioned. The history of the discipline is set on the background of the transformations of customs and images of the perfect family from the 1950s, then challenged by counterculture movements in the following decades.

In the second chapter four self-help books for married couples (by A. Beck, J. Gray, J. Gottman and R. Sternberg) are analysed. Before that, the history of American self-help literature is proposed. Phenomena such as Benjamin Franklin's work ethics, Horatio Alger's „rags to riches” narrative, New Thought and Human Potential movements are described. Finally, Philip Rieff's concept of „the psychological man” is presented and notions such as „psychobabble” and „pop-psychology” are analysed.

The third chapter is dedicated to the Polish school of sexology (on the background of Western research), including Kazimierz Imieliński's work as well as popular self-help books from the 1960s and 1970s by Mikołaj Kozakiewicz and Michalina Wisłocka. The vision of a happy marriage which is there constructed, is confronted with the reality of Polish marriages in these decades. The difference between the Polish expert discourse of the time and the American narrative is drawn.

Finally, the fourth chapter talks about the beginnings of psychotherapy practice in Poland as well as the emerging therapy culture, especially after the political breakthrough of 1989. The history of the

most important therapeutic institutions and most influential psychologists is presented. The psychological columns in womens' magazines („Twój Styl”, „Zwierciadło”, „Pani”) are then interpreted. The psychological / therapeutic discourse is seen as an important element of the Polish imagination in the times of transformation, since it is presented in the press as a part of the „Western way of life”. Characteristic features of this discourse as well as its transformations are described (such as rationalization, the striving for legitimization and the need to abolish myths). The activity of experts is seen as a didactic project, which aims to teach Poles how to talk about their feelings, while often ignoring historical processes and fundamental socio-economic changes.